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Blueprint for Prosperity: DWD Seeks Wisconsin Fast Forward Applications for Innovative School-to-Work Collaborations

Up to \$1.5 million available under first wave of Wisconsin Fast Forward expansion

MADISON – Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) Secretary Reggie Newson today announced DWD is accepting applications for the first wave of grants under the \$35.4 million expansion of the Wisconsin Fast Forward worker training grant program. The expansion is part of Governor Scott Walker's *Blueprint for Prosperity* initiative.

Up to \$1.5 million in Wisconsin Fast Forward-Blueprint for Prosperity funds are available for innovative proposals that target training to high school pupils with industry-recognized certifications in high-demand fields.

"Governor Walker's vision to develop Wisconsin's workforce includes equipping workers with skills in demand today and in the years to come, and that includes preparing young people for lifelong careers based on jobs that employers need to fill," Secretary Newson said. "Thanks to Governor Walker's *Blueprint for Prosperity*, we can target training investments in areas that bring together educators, employers, training providers and other stakeholders to address the skills gap, expand opportunities for workers, and advance Wisconsin's economy."

Highlights of the new Grant Program Announcement (GPA) for high school pupil worker training include:

- DWD's Office of Skills Development (OSD) is seeking applications from Wisconsin businesses in collaboration with school districts, educational partners and/or technical colleges to train and hire high school pupils.
- Potential grant amounts range from \$5,000 to \$150,000 per grantee. Grantees will need to match 50 percent of the grant amount through funds or in-kind sources.
- The deadline for grant applications is April 21, 2014.
- Successful graduates of the program should receive employment opportunities in recognized high-demand fields with industry-recognized certifications.
- Collaborations should define employer-driven workforce programs to train and hire high school pupils.
- Examples of potential partnerships include technical college/high school dual credit academies, work-based learning programs, and pre-apprenticeship models.

This month, Governor Walker signed legislation under his *Blueprint for Prosperity* initiative to invest an additional \$35.4 million in the Wisconsin Fast Forward program. The additional funds will enable worker training grants to technical colleges to reduce wait lists in high-demand fields, grants for collaborative projects among school districts, technical colleges, and businesses, as well as grants to enhance employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

As with the original Wisconsin Fast Forward worker training grant program that Governor Walker signed into law last year, DWD will oversee the Wisconsin Fast Forward–Blueprint for Prosperity initiative.

The GPA and application materials can be accessed at <http://dwd.wisconsin.gov/wff/prosperity/>.